Category 10-116

1: Melamid-
2: O'Shea

MK4 Trucial Oman
Card 001

GUIDE TO THE MK4 TRUCIAL OMAN FILE

[The United Arab Emirates, formerly known as Trucial Oman, the Trucial States or Trucial Sheikdoms, consist of seven principalities: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharja, Ajman, Fujaira, Umm al Qaiwan, and Ras al Khaima. These skeikhdoms or principalities were formerly British-protected states until they became an independent nation on December 2, 1971. The area, consisting of some 32,278 sq. mi., stretches 400 miles along the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman from Qatar to Oman. Inland it borders on Saudi Arabia. The region lies roughly between 51° - 57° East longitude and 23° - 27° North latitude.

The population was estimated to be 200,000 in 1972. In 1968 a census of the sheikhdoms gave the following figures: Dubai, 59,000 inhabitants; Abu Dhabi, 49,000; Sharja, 31,500; Ras al Khaima, 24,500; Fujaira, 9,700; Ajman, 4,200; Umm al Qaiwan, 3,700. The population is primarily Arabic, with some mixture of Iranians, Indians, and Baluchis.

Agriculture in the UAE is negligible although dates and sorghum are grown in the various oases of the region, along with other vegetable crops. Livestock consists of camels, donkeys, cattle, sheep, and goats, with horses being relatively rare. One of the most important industries of the coastal region is pearl diving, followed by fishing and shipbuilding. The sheikhdoms of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharja have large oil deposits and increasing oil production facilities, these areas actually being ranked together as the 14th largest oil producing region of the world. Fujaira and Ras al Khaima, on the other hand, produce substantial amounts of food. In 1971 Abu Dhaib launched an industrial development plan which included funds for projects in others areas of the UAE.

With the exception of a few Hindus the majority of the population of the Trucial Oman states are Moslems, with most of the Arabs belonging to the Wahhabi branch of the Sunni sect of Islam.

Traditional Arab social organization prevails among the Trucial States with emphasis on the extended family. Several related extended families form lineages, and these lineages in turn, related through common descent from a common ancestor, constitute tribes. Relations between the people and the ruling central authority are carried out through tribal leaders and heads of key families are extremely important (Area Handbook for the Peripheral States of the Arabian Peninsula, p. 136).

Each of the seven principalities is ruled by a sheikh with virtually absolute power, who issues legislation by decree. No political organizations or parties legally exist. Great Britain in 1951 attempted to create a more viable political entity through the establishment of a Trucial Sheikh Council. This council consisted of the seven rulers of the Trucial States, whose primary purpose was to provide a regular meeting place where matters of mutual interest could be discussed and coordinated. However, in actual practice this council did not become politically significant and very little progress was made in implementing joint projects. With the announcement in 1968 by the British government that it was withdrawing its forces from the Gulf States (the Trucial States plus Bahrain and Qatar), new interest was triggered among the sheikhs for the possible establishment of a federation. Under British encouragement the seven Trucial States along with Bahrain and Qatar, announced in 1968 the formation of the Federation of the Arab Amirates.

A Supreme Council was to be formed composed of the nine rulers which would function on the basis of unanimity The presidency of this Federation would rotate among the nine sheikhs. This council would function to draw up a charter and to formulate foreign, defense and economic policy and design the federal laws. By March 30, 1968, when the agreement was to be implemented it became obvious that the nine states were not as yet ready for federation. At a meeting held in July 1968, a compromise plan was worked out whereby the sheikhs mutually agreed to establish a Provisional Federal Council and a number of ad hoc committees to study the issues involved with the establishment of a common currency, a postal system, a flag, and a national anthem. In October 1969 the sheikhs finally decided to appoint Sheikh Zaid of Abu Dhabi as their first president with the town of Abu Dhabi serving as provisional capital. As previously noted the Trucial States finally achieved the status of an independent nation on December 2, 1971.

The Trucial Omen file consists of three sources, all in English. The primary source for the file is 2: O'Shea, written by a British government official in 1944-1945. The data in this source, however, are not uniform in quality throughout, but there is some detailed information on the native population, settlements, sheikhs, geography, piracy, the slave trade, and an excellent review of the pearl industry of the Arabian coast. Source 1: Melamid, written by a geographer, presents some limited data on the political history and political geography of Trucial Oman and Qatar, with additional scattered data on oil concessions, population, boundaries, and economic activities. 3: Melamid is a very brief survey concerning the realignment of the boundaries of the sheikhdoms in Trucial Oman. A useful summary of recent changes in the Trucial sheikhdoms is provided which notes territorial consolidation with more definite boundaries, recent oil concessions, and the development of urban facilities in Dubai. The file was processed in 1955.]